

The Red Badge of Courage

Stephen Crane

PENGUIN READERS

The Red Badge *of Courage*

STEPHEN CRANE

Level 3

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Introduction

There was a loud shout: "Forward, march!" They heard the sound of marching feet as another regiment passed. They followed them into the dark ill two long blue lines. They heard more men marching behind them. All that day, the army marched under a clear blue sky. They passed over hills and through woods.

The young soldier walked along, saying nothing. He looked around nervously. "What's that noise?" he asked himself. "Is it gunfire? And is that smoke?"

This is the story of a young American soldier named Henry Fleming. When he is a boy, he dreams of going to war. He thinks that war is an adventure. He wants to be a hero.

When he is older, his country is at war. The north of the country is fighting against the south. Everyone is always talking about the war. The newspapers are full of stories about great battles. Henry leaves home and joins the army. When he puts on his new uniform, he feels proud and excited. He is ready to fight for his part of the country, the North.

He quickly discovers that a soldier's life isn't always exciting. He spends many months in an army camp. He and the other new soldiers learn to march and to shoot. Henry has a lot of time to think. He asks himself what he will do in a battle. Will he run or fight? Is he as brave as the other men? He won't know the answers until the fighting starts.

After some time, the regiment faces the enemy. Henry and the other new soldiers are tested. They measure their courage against the enemy, their comrades, and themselves. Some are braver than others. Henry tries to understand the reasons. Maybe they are stronger than the others. Maybe they don't understand the

danger. Some soldiers try to help their comrades. Others only help themselves. Who is right and who is wrong?

The war is seen through Henry's eyes, but he is like every other young soldier. He is fighting in the American Civil War, but it is like every other war.

The American Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865, between the North and the South of the United States of America. The two parts of the country were very different. In the South, the main activity was farming. In the North, there were many big cities and factories. The war started when the states of the South wanted to leave the United States of America.

About two million men fought in the war for the North, and about 900,000 men fought for the South. Many of the battles were fought in the South. A lot of this part of the country was destroyed.

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Henry belongs to a Northern regiment. The battle in this book is like the Battle of Chancellorsville. That was fought in Virginia in May 1863. There were around 130,000 men fighting for the North and 60,000 for the South. Many men were killed or wounded on both sides. The South won the battle, but they later lost the war.

The writer of this book, Stephen Crane, was born in New Jersey in 1871. He was the youngest child in a family of fourteen children.

In 1890, he went to New York and began writing for a newspaper. He lived in a poor area of the city. He wrote about the people that he met there. In 1893, his first book came out. It was called *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*. He continued working for other newspapers after this.

The Red Badge of Courage came out in 1895, and it made Stephen Crane famous. Many people thought that Crane fought in the Civil War. They didn't know that he was born after the

war. He was never a soldier, but he described a soldier's life very well. This book is very different from other books that were written at this time. Crane wrote about the fear and suffering of ordinary soldiers. In his book, they aren't always heroes, and war is not just an adventure.

Because of this book, Crane was able to work for other American and foreign newspapers. In 1896, he traveled by ship from the United States to Cuba. The ship was destroyed, and he escaped in a small boat. He became very ill as a result. Two years later, he wrote a story about his escape. The book was called *The Open Boat and Other Stories*.

Stephen Crane went to live in England in 1897, and he became friends with other famous writers there. He continued to travel and to write for newspapers. He wrote about the war between Greece and Turkey in 1897. He also wrote about the Spanish-American War in 1898. He wrote two books of poems, *The Black Riders and Other Lines* (1895) and *War is Kind and Other Poems* (1899). His other books are *Active Service* (1899), *Whilomville Stories* (1900) and *Wounds in the Rain* (1900).

Stephen Crane died in Germany in 1900 at the age of twenty-eight.

Chapter 1 “I’m tired of waiting!”

In the cold early morning, the army was slowly waking up. It was resting in some green hills. A wide brown river lay at its feet. Across the river shone the red eyes of the enemy’s fires.

A tall soldier ran up from the river. “We’re going to move tomorrow!” he shouted. Men in blue uniforms came closer to listen. “We’re going to attack the enemy!”

“That’s a lie!” said one soldier loudly. “We’re not going to move!”

“It’s true!” said the tall soldier. “I heard it from a friend, and he heard it from his brother. And his brother heard it from an officer.”

“We can’t move!” said a young officer. “I’ve just put a new-floor in my tent. It’s made of wood, and it cost a lot of money!”

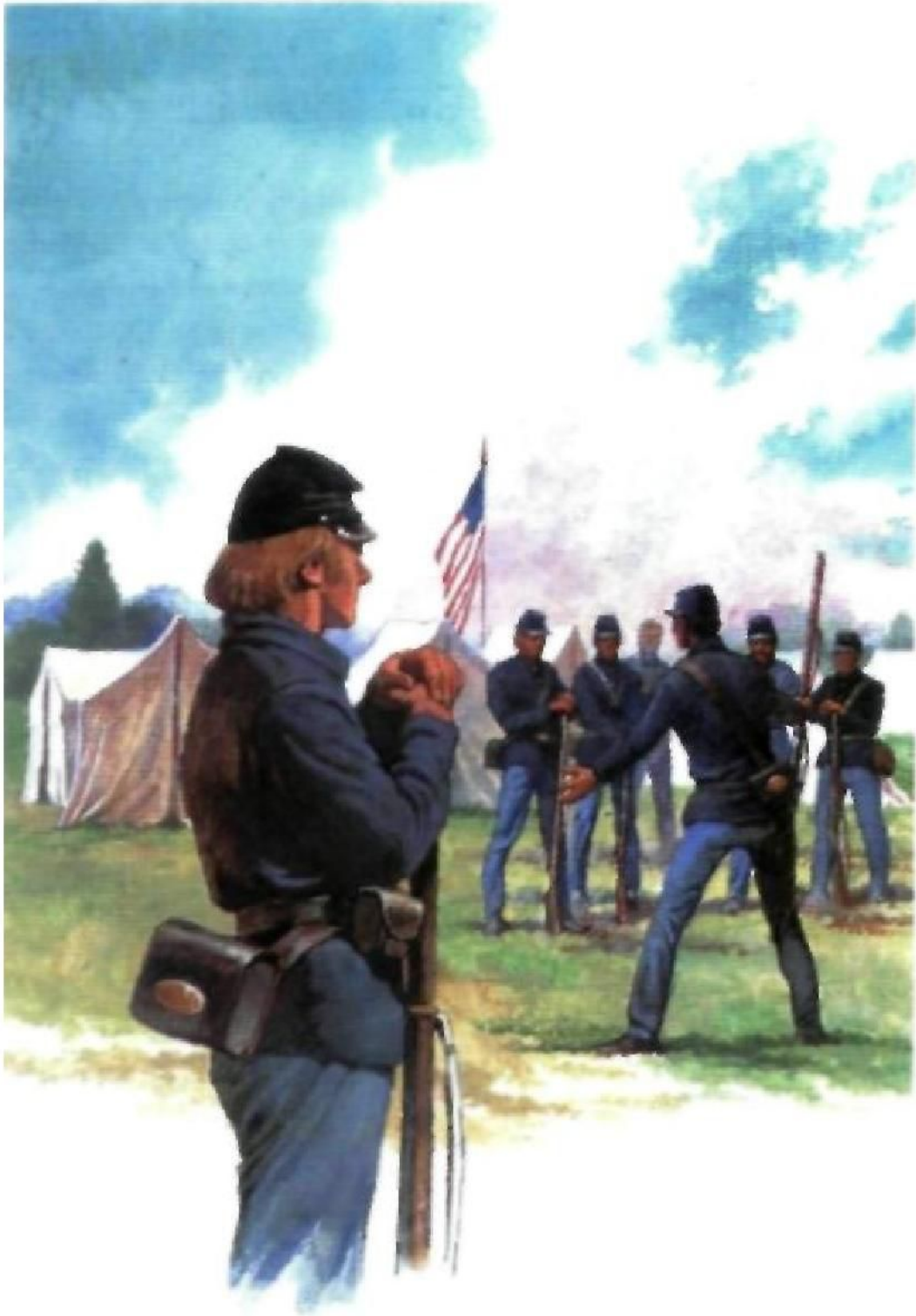
Groups of men talked excitedly. Some of them believed the tall soldier, but some of them had other ideas. One young soldier listened without speaking. Then he went into his tent. He wanted to be alone and to think.

“Are we really going to fight tomorrow?” he asked himself. “What will happen to me?”



When he was a boy, he dreamed of war. In his dreams, he was a hero, fighting for his country and its people. Then when he was older, his country was at war. The newspapers told stories of great battles. He wanted to join the brave soldiers in the blue army because he didn’t want to miss this adventure.

His mother was against the idea. “Don’t be stupid. Henry” she said. “Why do you want to go? A soldier’s life is hard. You don’t know what it’s like. I don’t want you to get hurt. I need you here on the farm more than the army needs you “



“We’re going to attack the enemy!”

He continued to read the newspapers. There was fine fighting down there. He talked to the people in the town. "We're winning!" they said. "Our boys in blue are doing a wonderful job!"

When he heard this, he couldn't wait. He got up early one morning and went into town. He came back wearing a blue uniform. "I've joined the army;" he told his mother excitedly.

She didn't look up. "I see," she said quietly. There were tears in her eyes. She helped him pack his bags. "I put some new socks and your best shirts into your bag," she said. "You'll always be warm. And choose your friends carefully. There are a lot of bad men in the army. Remember your father. He never drank and he never used bad language. So be careful and be a good boy."

Henry listened to his mother impatiently. Then, when she finished, he left. He turned back to say a last goodbye. He saw his mother crying.

He went into town to say goodbye to his friends. He felt proud in his new blue uniform. Young girls smiled at him and old men waved. He felt like a hero already.

After a long trip by train, he arrived in the camp by the river.



"We've been here for months," he thought. "We've practiced firing our rifles. And we've marched. And we've practiced and marched again. I'm tired of waiting! Are we ever going to fight?"

The men sat and told stories. The older soldiers laughed at the new ones. They shouted at them when they passed: "Fresh fish!" They all waited together. They didn't know why.

The young soldier saw the enemy once or twice. He was guarding one side of the stream, and they were guarding the other. He spoke to a small, thin man in gray. He liked him. "You're a good man," said the gray soldier. Henry felt sorry that they were at war.

The older soldiers told terrible stories about the enemy soldiers. “There are thousands and thousands of them,” they said. “They’re strong and they’re hungry. Nothing can stop them!” They talked about the smoke, fire, and blood of battle.

Henry didn’t always believe them. “They’re lying,” he told himself. “They’re just trying to scare the new soldiers.”

He suddenly felt afraid as he imagined his first battle. “Will I fight like a hero?” he asked himself. “Or will I run away?”

The tall soldier came into the tent, followed by the loud soldier. They were still talking angrily. “You’ll see! There’ll be a big battle tomorrow, I’m sure!” said the tall soldier.

The young soldier looked at him. “Jim, do you think the regiment will fight very well?”

“They’ll fight all right when they start shooting.” replied the tall soldier calmly.

The young soldier continued, “Do you think any of the boys will run away?”

The tall soldier thought for a minute. “Maybe a few of them will run when the fighting starts. They’re a new regiment, so you never know. I think they’ll fight as well as the others.”

“And you, Jim?” asked the young soldier. “Do you think you’ll run?”

“Maybe I’ll run if the others run,” he replied. “But if the others fight. I’ll fight with them.”

“You don’t know what you’ll do!” said the loud soldier.

But Henry wasn’t listening. “I’m glad Jim said that,” he said to himself. “I’m not the only one who’s scared.”

Chapter 2 “We’re leaving!”

The next morning, the young soldier learned that the tall soldier was wrong. The army didn’t move the next day, or the next, but

stayed in the camp. Henry had time to think. And he had time to worry.

He listened to his comrades talking excitedly about the battle. "Aren't they afraid?" he asked himself. "Maybe they're braver than I am. Or maybe they're just hiding their fear." He began to feel angry with himself. He was also angry with the generals. "Why don't we move? What are they waiting for?"

Then, early one morning, the young soldier woke up to the sound of loud voices: "Get up! We're leaving!"

It was still dark as he joined the other soldiers. They formed a line, carrying their rifles and equipment. They could see the red fires of the enemy camp across the river. They stood waiting for a long time.

Finally, an officer on horseback arrived with their orders. There was a loud shout: "Forward, march!" They heard the sound of marching feet as another regiment passed. They followed them into the dark in two long blue lines. They heard more men marching behind them. All that day, the army marched under a clear blue sky. They passed over hills and through woods.

The young soldier walked along, saying nothing. He looked around nervously. "What's that noise?" he asked himself. "Is it gunfire? And is that smoke?"

He looked into the faces of his comrades. He was hoping to see fear and worry. To his surprise, they were excited and happy. Some were discussing the army's plans for them.

The tall soldier was speaking. "You see? We're moving away from the river. We're going to come in behind the enemy lines."

"He's right!" said another man. "I had the same idea!"

Other voices spoke. "Me too!"

Not everyone agreed. "You're all crazy!" said a loud voice. "You don't know where we're going!"

Other men were laughing and joking. Henry didn't join in their conversations or their jokes. He felt sad and alone.

A fat soldier tried to steal a horse from a farmyard. He wanted it to carry his bag. He was escaping with his prize, when a young girl ran out from the farmhouse. She pulled the horse by the head and the fat soldier pulled on the other side.

The regiment stopped. They called to the young girl: "Hit him with a stick!" They laughed at the fat soldier as he returned to the line with his bag. They waved happily to the girl as they continued their march. They forgot the war for a few minutes.

In the evening, the line broke into regiments again. The regiments went into the fields to make camp. Soon there were tents and campfires on all sides.

The young soldier left his camp and walked into the quiet night. He lay down in the soft grass. He looked at the moon shining through the trees. He felt very lonely. "Why did I leave home?" he thought. He missed the farm. He thought about the fields and the house. "That's where I belong. I'm not a soldier. I'm not like the others."

He heard a noise in the grass and saw the loud soldier. "Wilson!" he called.

The loud soldier came near and looked down. "Hello, Henry. Is it you? What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just thinking," replied the young soldier.

The other man sat down and lit his pipe. "You don't look very happy," he said. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Henry.

The loud soldier started talking about the battle. "This time we're really going to fight!" he said. His voice was happy and excited. "And we're going to beat them! I'm sure we're going to win!" He became more serious. "They've beaten us every time until now, but this time, we'll win!"

"But you think this march is stupid, don't you?" asked the young soldier.

"No" explained the other man. "I'm happy to march if we

fight at the end. But I hate moving around for no reason. And we're tired and the food is bad!"

"Jim says we're going to fight this time," said the young soldier.

"He's right," said the loud soldier. His voice grew excited again and he jumped to his feet. "And we're going to win, I'm sure!" He spoke like an old soldier.

The young soldier looked at him coldly. "Oh, you're going to do great things, I guess!"

"Oh, I don't know. But I'll fight as well as other men!" replied the loud soldier.

"How do you know that you won't run away?" asked the young soldier.

"Run away? Me? Of course not!"

The young soldier continued, "But you're not the bravest man in the world, are you?"

"I didn't say that!" The loud soldier was angry. "And who are you? Why did you ask me a question like that?" He walked away, leaving Henry alone again.

Henry slowly returned to his tent and lay down next to the sleeping tall soldier. He stayed awake for a long time. He asked himself the same painful questions again and again: "Will I be brave? Or will I run away?" At last, he fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter 3 "When are we going to fight?"

The new regiment marched all the next day. They crossed a bridge over the river, and then they camped near a forest. The young soldier was afraid of the forest. "Maybe the enemy's hiding there!" he thought. "Maybe they're going to attack us in the dark!" He watched the forest carefully, but he saw nothing.

Early the next morning, they followed a narrow road into the forest. They marched for hours without stopping.



Early the next morning, they followed a narrow road into the forest

“I’m tired!” said the loud soldier unhappily.” And my feet hurt!”

“My bag’s too heavy,” said the tall soldier. “I’m going to leave it here.” He put it down by the side of the road.

The other soldiers did the same. They left everything that they didn’t need. Each man kept only his clothes, bed cover, food, water, rifle, and bullets. “You can eat and shoot now,” said the tall soldier. “That’s all that you need to do.”

The new regiment could now move more quickly, like the older regiments. They still looked like a new regiment, though. Their uniforms were still new, and the colors of their flag were still bright.

Finally, the army sat down to rest. “This isn’t a real war. We’re just practicing,” thought Henry. “We’re just marching and marching. When are we going to fight?”

Then, one gray morning, the army began to run. The young soldier was not really awake, but he had to run with his comrades. He was afraid of falling. “The others will run over me!” he thought. He was carried along by the crowd. For a second he felt as weak as a baby. The skin that covered his heart seemed very thin.

He took the time *to* look around him. He could not stop and he could not escape from the regiment. It was all around him. The laws and the history of his country were on four sides. He was in a moving box. He felt very afraid.” I never wanted to fight in the war,” he told himself. “The government brought me here. And now I’m going to die!”

The regiment crossed a little stream. Suddenly, the young soldier heard the sound of cannon fire in front of him. He forgot his fear and ran faster. He only wanted to see the fighting. His heart was beating very quickly as he climbed up a hill.

He was surprised when he looked down. There wasn’t a big battlefield. There were some small green fields with trees all around them. Small groups of soldiers were running through the

trees and firing their rifles. A dark battle line of soldiers lay on the grass. A flag waved brightly.

The regiment formed into a battle line and began to move toward the woods. Henry watched the soldiers who were tiring busily. "What are they firing at?" he asked himself. "I can't see anything."

Just then, he saw a dead soldier lying on the ground. He wore broken shoes and an old brown uniform that was too big for him. The young soldier looked into his face with great interest. "He fought and he died," he thought. "He knows what it's like. But he can't tell me."

After that, he didn't want to see the battle. When he was running up the hill, he was ready to fight. Now he had time to think. He was afraid again. His back felt cold and his legs felt weak. He saw danger all around him. The shadows in the woods looked like enemy soldiers. "We can't go in there!" he told himself. "They'll kill us all!"

He looked at his comrades. They were walking calmly through fields and woods. Their faces showed interest but not fear. They wanted to see their first battle.

The young soldier wanted to shout at them, "Stop! Go back! We're all going to die! Don't you understand?" He opened his mouth, but he couldn't make a sound. He was too afraid. "They'll laugh at me if I tell them to go back," he thought. "They won't understand. They're too stupid. I'm the only one who understands. And nobody will believe me."

He felt very sorry for himself. He walked slowly, with his head down. A young officer saw him, and started beating him on the shoulder with his sword. "Hurry, young man!" he said in a loud voice. "Hurry!"

The young soldier walked faster, but he kept his head down. He hated the young officer. "He doesn't understand me!" he told himself angrily. "Stupid animal!"

The regiment continued marching. After some time, they stopped in a large, open space in a forest. They could still hear the sound of rifle fire. They could see little balls of white smoke from the rifles.

Many men in the regiment began to build little hills in front of them, using earth, stones, and sticks. They wanted to protect themselves against the enemy bullets. But then the regiment was ordered to move. The young soldier was very surprised. "Why did we come here?" he asked the tall soldier. "Why are we leaving so soon?"

"I'm sure there's a good reason," replied the tall soldier patiently.

They moved to a new position, and they built more little hills. Then they moved again. And again. The tall soldier was angry. "When are we going to fight?" he cried. "What's the purpose of all this marching? Those generals are stupid!"

Now the tall soldier was angry. "Be quiet!" he shouted. "You're not a general!"

"I just want to fight" explained the tall soldier. "I didn't come here to walk!"

The regiment marched into the forest. Henry began to worry again. "Will I be brave, or will I run away?" he asked himself. He thought about dying, and a new idea came to him. "If I die, I'll be able to rest." He began to feel less afraid.

Just then, he heard the sound of cannon fire. He saw a group of soldiers running and firing. He heard the sound of their rifles. The regiment on his right was standing and firing all together. He watched them through a cloud of smoke. The noise grew louder.

Suddenly, he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. It was the tall soldier. "It's my first and last battle," he said sadly. "I'm sure that I'm going to die." He had tears in his eyes and his hands were shaking. He gave the young soldier a small package in a yellow

envelope, "There are some letters inside. I want you to give them to my family."

"What do you mean?" cried Henry. But there was no reply. The other soldier walked away.

Chapter 4 "They're coming!"

Henry's regiment stopped outside a wood. Through the trees, they could see some open fields and a thick cloud of smoke. In the smoke they could see a line of men running toward them. A team of horses ran with the men, pulling cannon on wheels.

A shell screamed over their heads and landed in the woods near them. A cloud of brown earth flew up into the air and showered down on them. Bullets hit the trees where they were hiding. The soldiers stayed very close to the ground.

They heard a loud cry of pain. A young officer was shot in the hand. Another officer covered his wound with a clean piece of cloth.

Far away, the battle flag was falling, and there was smoke and fire all around. Men in blue came out of the smoke, running like wild horses. More and more men ran toward the regiment, shouting. Their voices mixed with the sound of the bullets and the shells. As they came closer, the older regiments began to laugh at them. "What's the matter? What are you afraid of?" they called. "Are you trying to hide?"

Officers on horseback were beating them with their swords and kicking them. "Stop! Go back!" they cried. The running men didn't see or hear them.

Henry saw the fear on their faces. He wanted to run, but he couldn't. His legs refused to move. "What are they running from?" he asked himself. "I want to see it. But when I see it, maybe I'll run too!"

The young soldier only had to wait for a few minutes.

“They’re coming!” cried a voice.

The men checked their rifles. Henry had a terrible thought: “Is there a bullet in my rifle?”

A general stopped his horse near another officer on horseback. “You have to stop them!” he shouted angrily.

“Yes, General” the officer replied nervously. “We’ll try!”

The man next to the young soldier was talking to himself: “Oh, no, we’re in trouble now!”

A young officer stood at the back of the regiment. “Don’t fire, boys! Wait until I tell you! Wait until they come close!”

Suddenly a crowd of enemy soldiers came running across the field, shouting wildly. The young soldier didn’t have time to think. He threw his rifle into position and fired a first wild shot. He immediately began to work like a machine. He put in another bullet. He fired his rifle, again and again. He suddenly forgot about himself. He was part of the regiment and part of the army. His country was in danger, and he had to protect it.

He knew that his comrades were all around him. They were all brothers, fighting the same enemy. They all faced the danger of death. He could see them through the smoke. They reached down to get another bullet. Then they stood up to fire. He could hear the sound of metal on metal as they put in the bullets. The rifles made a loud crashing noise. Strange sounds came from the soldiers’ mouths. Some shouted and some sang. Some made noises like wild animals. The tall soldier cursed.

The officers stayed behind the soldiers, shouting orders. They watched the enemy through the thick smoke. A man dropped his rifle. He ran away screaming. An officer stopped him and began hitting him. He pushed him back toward the line. The man looked at the officer with the eyes of a beaten dog. He tried to put a bullet into his rifle, but his hands were shaking. The officer helped him.